

THE MOUNTAINEER

NO. 2.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1860.

VOL. II.

THE MOUNTAINEER

OFFICE: South-West Room of COURSE.
JAMES FERGUSON.
TERMS: \$6 per Annum in Advance.
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Poetry.

SEED-WORDS.

"Twas nothing—a mere idle word,
From careless lips that fell,
Forgot, perhaps, as soon as said,
And purposeless as well.
But yet, as on the passing wind
It bore the little seed,
Which blossoms unheeded, as a flower,
Or as a noxious weed—
So often will a single word,
Unknown, its end fulfill,
And bear, in seed, the flower and fruit
Of actions good or ill.

Selections.

GIVING AWAY A CHILD.

On board of one of the lake steamers, bound for the far West, were an Irish family; husband, wife, and three children. They were evidently in very destitute circumstances; but the exceeding beauty of the children—two girls and a boy—was the admiration of their fellow-passengers. A lady who had no children of her own, was desirous of adopting one of the little travelers, and made application to the father, through a friend, who gives the following touching, and as we suppose, truthful account of the negotiations:

I proceeded, he says, immediately upon my delicate diplomacy. Finding my friend on deck, I thus opened my affair: "You are very poor."

"Poor, sir," said he, "as if there were poorer than me through the world, God pity both of us, for we'd be about equal."

"Then how do you manage to support your children?"

"Is it support them, sir? Why I don't support them any way; they get supported some way or other. It'll be time enough for me to complain when they do."

"Would it be a relief to you to part with one of them?"

It was too sudden; he turned sharply round:

"A what, sir?" he cried; "a relief to part from my child? Would it be a relief to have the hands chopped from the body, or the heart torn out of my breast? Alas, indeed! God be good to us, what do you mean?"

"You don't understand me," I replied.

"If now it were in my power to provide comfortably for one of your children, would you stand in the way of it?"

"No, sir," said he; "the heavens knows that I would willingly cut the sunshine away from myself, that they might get the warm of it; but tell us what you're drawing at?"

I then told him that a lady had taken a fancy to have one of his children; and, if he would consent to it, it should be educated, and finally settled comfortably in life.

This threw him into a fit of gratulation. He scratched his head, and looked the picture of bewilderment. The struggle between a father's love and a child's interests was evident and touching. At length he said:

"O, mother, wouldn't it be a great thing for the baby? But I must go and talk with Mary, that's the mother of them; as it wouldn't be right to give away her children before her face, and she to know nothing at all about it."

"Away with you, then," said I, "and bring me an answer back as soon as possible."

In about half an hour he returned, leading two of his children. His eyes were red and swollen, and his face pale from excitement and agitation.

"Well, I inquired, 'what success?'"

"Delad, it was a hard struggle, sir," said he; "but I've been talking to Mary, and she says, as it's for the child's good, maybe the heavens above will give us strength to bear it."

"Very well; and which of them is it to be?"

"Faix, and I don't know, sir," he and she ran eye dabbly over both.

"Here's little Norah—she's the oldest, and won't need her mother so much; but then—O, tear an' sighs, it's myself that can't tell which I'd rather part with least; so take the first one that comes with a blessing. There, sir," and he handed over little Norah; turning back, he snatched her up in his arms and gave her one long, hearty father's kiss, saying through his tears:

"May God be good to him that's good to you, and them that offers you hurt or harm, may their souls never see St. Peter."

Then taking his other child by the hand, he walked away, leaving Norah with me.

I took her down to the cabin and we thought the matter settled. It must be confessed, to my great indignation, however, in about an hour's time I saw my friend Pat at the window. As soon as he caught my eye he began making signs for me to come out. I did so, and found that he had the other child in his arms.

"What's the matter now?" I asked.

"Well, sir," said he, "I ask your pardon for troubling you, but we're thinking that maybe it'd make no difference—you see, sir, I've been talking to Mary, and she says she can't part with Norah, because the creature has a look or air; but there's little Biddy, she's purtyer far, an' if you please, sir, will you swap?"

"Certainly; whenever you like," said I. So he snatched up little Norah, as though it was some recovered treasure, and darted away with her, leaving little Biddy, who remained with us all night; but in the morning we entered the cabin in the morning, there was Pat making his mysterious signs again at the window, and this time he had the youngest, a baby in his arms.

"What's wrong now?" I inquired.

"Be the boy, sir, an' it's meall that's almost ashamed to tell ye. Ye see I've been talking to Mary, and she didn't like to part with Norah; because she has a look or air, an' be me soul, I can't part with Biddy, because she's the model of her mother; but there's little Pauline, sir, there's a lump of a Christian for you, two years old, and not a day more; he'll never be any trouble to any one; for as he takes after his mother he'll have the brightest eyes, an' as he takes after his father he'll have a fine broad pair of shoulders to push his way through the world. Will you swap again, sir?"

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much more breathless to think of afterward than to see done. He did it with such apparent ease and certainty, that it was like seeing a bird fly or a spider walk the ceiling—not to be wondered at for that kind of creature. I am inclined to think it would be more startling (better calling one to imagine himself in the performer's place) if he were to do it in common clothes. Looking scarcely larger than a butterfly as he reeled the opposite shore, Blondie remained fifteen or twenty minutes out of sight, and then the pistol was fired to announce his return. He came quietly on to the center, where he stopped to lie down at full length on the rug, and execute various postures and gymnastics; and, between this and his reaching, our shore again, he made several pretended trips, as if losing his balance—the screams of the frightened ladies, at this, very comically varying the tone which was being endeavored by the hand. As he came up the slant of the rope again, I saw that his lips were tightly drawn together and his features were rigidly set with the mental exertion, and it was an expression of face that would be worth painting as a type of a spectator's suspense. I could not help admiring the little man exceedingly, and I was the first to give him a hand as he stepped on the cliff. It was a cold clammy grip that he gave me in return, and his fingers felt icy and wet. Everybody who could reach him gave him a shake of the hand on his way to the shanty, and the enthusiasm for him seemed universal. And so ended 'the show' of a human life put fearfully in peril! M. Blondie, I was afterward told, has a wife and several children, and reside at Niagara, having adopted it as his theater of performance. His professional profits amount to ten thousand dollars a year.

"What's the matter now?" I asked.

"Well, sir," said he, "I ask your pardon for troubling you, but we're thinking that maybe it'd make no difference—you see, sir, I've been talking to Mary, and she says she can't part with Norah, because the creature has a look or air; but there's little Biddy, she's purtyer far, an' if you please, sir, will you swap?"

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resented by 10,000,000 tons of coal devoted to steam engines is equal to the labor of 40,000,000 strong men per annum. Is it any wonder that such a stupendous power should have given England the mastery in commerce and manufactures? The possession of coal mines is momentous in its consequences; and the annual product of England for all purposes is no less than 85,000,000 tons.

In the middle ages France and Germany supplied England with all kinds of manufactures; but the tide of commerce is changed, and all owing to the natural possession of great coal mines, of which there are no less than 3,000 in the Island. A commission of French manufacturers who visited Manchester three years ago, made a report on their return, and declared that although English operatives were paid higher wages, yet, owing to cheap fuel and machinery, they could produce cotton goods at about one-half the price of the French. Such is the power of coal.

It is supposed that all coal, both soft and hard, is of vegetable origin, having been formed by long processes of fermentation, decomposition, and carbonization, from submerged forests, or from grasses, leaves, shrubs, and foliage, which have settled into compact masses, and have gone through various changes. Peat is vegetable matter on the way to become soft coal, which, undergoing still further changes, becomes hard coal. The shapes of great trees, of a size almost unknown on the earth at present, have been traced out in the coal-beds with great certainty. This is one of the most curious processes of investigation. This is one instance: a fossil trunk was found near Bonn, which had 792 annual rings, showing that the tree which had been thus turned into coal was nearly eight hundred years old. The lignites are very curious. These are specimens in the transition state from wood to coal. In some cases, as in one in the possession of the writer, while one end is coal, the other is yet wood, as if charred. The coal fields in the United States are about